

# SI429 eCommunities

Winter 2012 Course Syllabus (Draft as of 12/24/11)

Prof. Paul Resnick

## Overview

This course prepares students to analyze online interaction environments with an eye toward design. For the purpose of this course, a community is defined as a group of people who sustain interaction over time. The group may be held together by a common identity, a collective purpose, or merely by the individual utility gained from the interactions. An online interaction environment is a space, accessed through computers or other electronic devices, in which community members can conduct some or all of their interactions. We will use the terms eCommunity and online community interchangeably, as shorthand both for communities that conduct all of their interactions online and for communities that use on-line interaction to supplement face-to-face interactions.

The course prepares students for roles as online community designers and managers. The first half of the course examines different types of online communities and introduces two analytic frameworks that are useful for describing online communities, third places and communities of practice, that describe aspects of social environments and learning environments respectively. Most online communities have some elements of each, to a greater or lesser extent. Students will draw on these analytic frameworks to describe what happens in existing online communities.

The second half of the course connects social science theories with the goals of online community managers and with the alternative social and technical design alternatives available to them. The central construct is the design claim: Alternative X will help/hinder the achievement of goal Y, in contexts Z. Students will draw on these claims to make design suggestions for new or existing online communities.

## Logistics

Meets Tuesdays and Thursdays 10-11:30 in 1230 Weill Hall

Professor Paul Resnick

Office Hours: Wednesdays 4-5PM Room 4344 North Quad

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## Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, a student should be able to:

- Identify the broad categories of communities and the kinds of activities that they include.
- Describe an online community using the concepts and vocabulary of Third Places and Communities of Practice;
- Make principled design and management choices for online communities to make them run better.
- Conceptualize a new online community and make high-level decisions about who it will be for, what activities it will include, and the technology platform to use.
- Write directly and succinctly.

## Pre-requisites

There are no formal pre-requisites.

This course assumes some familiarity with technologies and the ability to explore them on your own. This course will spend very little time explicitly teaching about computing technology, but will frequently assume it as background.

## Texts and other Readings

You should purchase the following books, or use them at the Shapiro Library reserve desk (see bibliography for details):

- (Wenger 1998)
- (Wenger, White and Smith 2009)
- (Kraut, Resnick, Kiesler, Ren, Chen, Burke, Kittur, Riedl and Konstan 2012) (Should be available in February)

We'll also be reading excerpts from several other books and articles. Links to electronic copies are provided through cTools, in the resources section.

For each session there will be assigned readings. Occasionally, there will also be optional readings. All of these will be available electronically through cTools, or are in the required books.

## Communities

Together as a class, we'll be studying a couple of online communities. We will choose these collectively.

In addition, you will each pick a community to describe and either the same or a different one to make design suggestions for.

# Class Activities

Each class session will consist of one or more of the following segments:

- **Quiz about the required readings.** You should read all the required material *before* class. Most days at the beginning of class there will be a 1-minute, easy quiz about the readings.
- **Discussion of the required readings.** I will randomly call on students in class to answer questions about the required readings. If you have not done the reading, it is best to just admit it and pass, but I hope that this embarrassing situation will not come up. If you read but aren't sure how to answer the question, say what you do understand and I will gently lead you to the important ideas in a Socratic dialogue.  
Discussion will generally proceed in two phases:
  - *Description:* statements or questions about what the author claims.
  - *Critique:* arguments about whether the author is correct or what the author has left out.
- **Application of readings to online communities.** When the class session is devoted to conceptual material, we will work together as a class to apply the concepts from those readings to online communities that we will be studying together. That collective activity will be a warm-up for an individual activity of applying the concepts to a community that you pick to study. You will carry out that individual activity and hand it in before the next class.
- **Brainstorming about communities to study.** When the class session is devoted to exploring a particular kind of online community (most sessions in January), you will be asked to share ideas for communities of that type that you could study.
- **Critique of student writing.** Each student will have one of their short writing assignments publicly critiqued and collectively edited once during the semester.

There will be a shared EtherPad document for each class session, where we will collectively keep notes. If you're someone who understands better by taking summary notes while reading, please add your notes to the document before class. In class each day, I will display the EtherPad document on a public screen.

## Assignments

- 3 1-page reflection articles on exploration activities:
  - R1: Wikipedia edit
  - R2: configuring MediaWiki or FB Group or Google Group
  - R3: configuring Drupal or Ning
- 6 community suggestions (communities you could study); add these to a Google doc and be prepared to describe the community in class. These are shown as C1-C6 in the schedule showing due dates.

- 11 2-page write-ups, applying concepts to an online community you are studying. These are shown as A1-A11 in the schedule showing due dates.
- 7 feedback write-ups to other students offering suggestion for improving some of their 2-page write-ups. These are shown as F1-F7 in the schedule showing due dates.
- Three 10-20 page papers. These will mostly be compilations of the 2-page write-ups, with appropriate revisions, plus a few transitions. These are shown as P1-P3 in the schedule showing due dates.

This is a 3-credit course, so you should expect to spend, on average, 12 hours per week on the course, over the course of the 14 week semester. Here's my approximate estimate of how that time would be split up:

- in-class time (3 hours)
- required reading (4 hours)
- weekly writing assignments and community scouting (3 hours)
- major assignments (3 hours/week averaged over the term)

## Grading

Pass/Fail checkoffs: 25% (116 points available, maximum score = 100, no extensions for late work)

- R1-R3 (3 points each; total 9)
- C1-C6 (1 point each; total 6)
- A1-A11 (3 points each: total 33)
- F1-F6 (3 points each; total 18)
- 25 1-minute quizzes at the beginning of class about readings (2 points each; total 50)

P1 Community description paper: 25%

P2 Design suggestions paper: 25%

P3 Prospective community suggestions: 25%

## Schedule

Session	DATE	TOPIC	READING	Assignment due
1	Jan. 5	Course Introduction; Communities and Technologies	(Wenger, White et al. 2009), Chapter 2  (Powazek 2002), Introduction	

			<a href="http://titanpad.com/9QzjApQKFn">http://titanpad.com/9QzjApQKFn</a>	
2	Jan. 10	Social/Professional Networks	(boyd 2008) <b>Sections 1.4-1.5, pages 15-41</b> only  (DiMicco, Millen, Geyer, Dugan, Brownholtz and Muller 2008)  <a href="http://titanpad.com/JG2wifKSFE">http://titanpad.com/JG2wifKSFE</a>	
3	Jan. 12	Health and Wellness Communities  (Guest speaker by video? OneRecovery?)	(Hwang, Ottenbacher, Green, Cannon-Diehl, Richardson, Bernstam and Thomas 2010)  (Frost and Massagli 2008)  <a href="http://titanpad.com/ekvzcaZsj0">http://titanpad.com/ekvzcaZsj0</a>	C1: Find a health and wellness community you could study
4	Jan. 17	Production Communities	(Forte, Larco and Bruckman 2009)  (Benkler 2002) <b>pages 369-381</b>  Make an edit on Wikipedia (see the resource, "Wikipedia Edit Instructions")  Optional: (Mockus, Fielding and Herbsleb 2002)  <a href="http://titanpad.com/HgpLrHL07W">http://titanpad.com/HgpLrHL07W</a>	C2: Find a production community you could study
5	Jan. 19	Third Places	Oldenburg (Oldenburg 1989) Chapter 2, pages 20-42  <a href="http://titanpad.com/vHrpLGu8kD">http://titanpad.com/vHrpLGu8kD</a>	C3: Find a social/discussion community you could study  R1: Reflection paper on editing on wikipedia.
6	Jan. 24	Gaming Communities  (Guest speaker?)	(Steinkuehler and Williams 2006)  (Williams, Ducheneaut, Xiong, Zhang, Yee and Nickell 2006)  <a href="http://titanpad.com/dtG1t8tcOy">http://titanpad.com/dtG1t8tcOy</a>	C4: Find a gaming community you could study
7	Jan. 26	Learning Communities/Communities	(Wenger, McDermott and Snyder 2002) chapter 1	C5: Find a Community of Practice (learning

		of Practice	(Kuznetsov and Paulos 2010) <a href="http://titanpad.com/yNHPj6QOvU">http://titanpad.com/yNHPj6QOvU</a>	community) you could study
8	Jan. 31	Q&A and Tech Support  (Guest speaker? Cothrel? Ackerman?)	(Lithium Technologies) Gold in Them Hills  (Hansen, Ackerman, Resnick and Munson 2007)  Optional: (Adamic, Zhang, Bakshy and Ackerman 2008)  <a href="http://titanpad.com/cBJJ42kAUj">http://titanpad.com/cBJJ42kAUj</a>	C6: Find a Q&A or Tech Support community you could study
9	Feb. 2	Participation and Reification	(Wenger 1998) Vignettes and pages 45-50  (Wenger 1998) Chapter 1  <a href="http://titanpad.com/iTO3x0gWBF">http://titanpad.com/iTO3x0gWBF</a>	A1: analyze a community as a third place
10	Feb. 7	Platforms Exploration I:  MediaWiki, Facebook Groups, Google groups	Configure a MediaWiki site or a FB Group or a Google Group  <a href="http://titanpad.com/s9KakvdJXE">http://titanpad.com/s9KakvdJXE</a>	A2: analyze a community in terms of participation and reification
11	Feb. 9	Platforms Exploration II:  Drupal, PhpBB, Meetup	Configure a Drupal site or a PhpBB site; explore the features of Meetup groups (no free group creation...)  <a href="http://titanpad.com/CfzD48Tx2U">http://titanpad.com/CfzD48Tx2U</a>	R2: Reflection paper on configuring MediaWiki or FB Group or Google Group
12	Feb. 14	Mutual engagement, Joint enterprise, shared repertoire	(Wenger 1998) chapter 2  <a href="http://titanpad.com/gXDNRAVmR0">http://titanpad.com/gXDNRAVmR0</a>	R3: Reflection paper on configuring Drupal or PhpBB
13	Feb. 16	Community trajectories	Wenger (Wenger 1998) ch. 3, pages 86-98  <a href="http://titanpad.com/kjTobRyjes">http://titanpad.com/kjTobRyjes</a>	A3: Analyze a community in terms of mutual engagement (community), joint

				enterprise (domain), and shared repertoire (practice)
14	Feb. 21	Individual trajectories	Wenger (Wenger 1998) ch. 3, pages 99-102 and chapter 6, pages 149-158  <a href="http://titanpad.com/eeC745u47m">http://titanpad.com/eeC745u47m</a>	A4: Analyze a community in terms of community trajectories  F1: written feedback to a peer about their A3
15	Feb. 23	Boundaries	(Wenger 1998) ch. 4  <a href="http://titanpad.com/vcvF7Ps3II">http://titanpad.com/vcvF7Ps3II</a>	A5: Analyze a community in terms of individual trajectories  F2: written feedback to a peer about their A4
	Feb. 28		Winter break—no class	
	Mar 1		Winter break—no class	
16	Mar. 6	Online Community Design	(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012) Introduction chapter  Wenger, White and Smith, Chapter 3  <a href="http://titanpad.com/XTQs0EObrL">http://titanpad.com/XTQs0EObrL</a>	F3: written feedback to a peer about their A5
17	Mar. 8	Contributions part I: Requests and Intrinsic Motivators	(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012) Contributions chapter through section 4  (Latane 1981)  <a href="http://titanpad.com/vMCDDIIcI5">http://titanpad.com/vMCDDIIcI5</a>	P1: Cumulative description paper
18	Mar 13	Contributions part II: Increasing expectancy-value	(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012) Contributions chapter sections 5-7  (Crumlish and Malone 2009) Chapter 6  <a href="http://titanpad.com/nNUvyq5yzC">http://titanpad.com/nNUvyq5yzC</a>	
19	Mar 15	Identity-based Commitment	(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012) Commitment chapter through section	A6: Describe what contributions your

			<p>on identity-based commitment (Wenger 1998) chapter 8</p> <p>Optional (recommended): (Minow 1997) chapter 2* (Burkhalter 1999)</p> <p><a href="http://titanpad.com/sw1bopPQjZ">http://titanpad.com/sw1bopPQjZ</a></p>	<p>(2<sup>nd</sup>) community needs (or will need) and make one or two design suggestions for how it can elicit those contributions</p>
20	Mar 20	Commitment: bonds and norms	<p>(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012) Commitment chapter, remaining sections</p> <p>(Crumlish and Malone 2009) Chapter 4, pg. 81-120</p> <p><a href="http://titanpad.com/yBRfTdJw30">http://titanpad.com/yBRfTdJw30</a></p>	
21	Mar 22	Regulation: Preventing and limiting bad behavior	<p>(Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckler and Barab 2002)</p> <p>(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012) Regulation chapter through coerced compliance section</p> <p>(Crumlish and Malone 2009) Chapter 15</p> <p><a href="http://titanpad.com/t3tMtQhKuC">http://titanpad.com/t3tMtQhKuC</a></p>	<p>A7: Make one or two design suggestions about how your (2<sup>nd</sup>) community can increase member commitment</p>
22	Mar 27	Regulation: Norms and voluntary compliance	<p>(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012) Regulation chapter section on encouraging voluntary compliance</p> <p>(Martey and Stromer-Galley 2007)</p> <p><a href="http://titanpad.com/pn634orPKV">http://titanpad.com/pn634orPKV</a></p>	<p>F4: written feedback to a peer about their A7</p>
23	Mar 29	Newcomers: Recruiting and Selection	<p>(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012) Newcomers chapter sections on recruiting and selection</p> <p>(Crumlish and Malone 2009) Pages 70-75</p>	<p>A8: Describe what bad behavior may need to be regulated in your (2<sup>nd</sup>) community and make one or two design suggestions</p>



			<a href="http://titanpad.com/2SICqd7ia2">http://titanpad.com/2SICqd7ia2</a>	about how your community should deal with that.
24	Apr 3	Newcomers: Socialization	(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012) Newcomers chapter sections on retention, teaching, and protecting  <a href="http://titanpad.com/kWi1JSDzUu">http://titanpad.com/kWi1JSDzUu</a>	F5: written feedback to a peer about their A8
25	Apr 5	Startup: Carving out a niche	(Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012) Startup chapter sections on carving out and defending a niche  (Powazek 2002) chapter 1  <a href="http://titanpad.com/nhzz63iU84">http://titanpad.com/nhzz63iU84</a>	A9: Make one or two design suggestions about how your (2 <sup>nd</sup> ) community should handle newcomers
26	Apr 10	Tools and platforms Analysis Framework	Wenger, White and Smith, Chapters 4, 5, and 8  <a href="http://titanpad.com/NZjGU3pr4h">http://titanpad.com/NZjGU3pr4h</a>	A10: Make one or two design suggestions about how your prospective community should define its scope  F6: written feedback to a peer about their A9
27	Apr 12	Tools and activity orientations	Wenger, White and Smith, Chapter 6  <a href="http://titanpad.com/apq7pKKBbb">http://titanpad.com/apq7pKKBbb</a>	P2: Cumulative design suggestions paper
28	Apr 17	Startup: getting to critical mass	(Powazek 2002) chapter 2  (Kraut, Resnick et al. 2012) Startup chapter sections on getting to critical mass  <a href="http://titanpad.com/rhK46klHVj">http://titanpad.com/rhK46klHVj</a>	A11: Describe your prospective community in terms of activity orientations and suggest platforms, tools, and configurations
	April 24	No Class; papers due		P3: Cumulative paper on suggestions for prospective community

# An Important Note on Plagiarism

At the University of Michigan and in professional settings generally, plagiarism is an extremely serious matter. All individual written submissions must be your own, original work, written entirely in your own words. You may incorporate excerpts from publications by other authors, but they *must be clearly marked as quotations* and properly attributed. You may obtain copy editing assistance, and you may discuss your ideas with others, but all substantive writing and ideas must be your own or else be explicitly attributed to another, using a citation sufficiently detailed for someone else to easily locate your source.

All cases of plagiarism will be officially reported and dealt with according to Rackham policies. There will be no warnings, no second chances, no opportunity to rewrite; all plagiarism cases will be immediately reported to SI's Dean of Academic Affairs. ***Consequences can range from failing the assignment (a grade of zero) or failing the course to expulsion from the University.*** For additional information about plagiarism, see the "Academic and Professional Integrity Policy Statement" in the [SI Master's Student Handbook](#), the Rackham [pamphlet on Academic Integrity](#), and the [Plagiarism](#) document from the UM Libraries. If you have any doubts about whether you are using the words or ideas of others appropriately, please discuss them with your GSI or professor.

## Accommodations

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way I teach may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; <http://www.umich.edu/sswd/>) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. I will treat any information you provide as private and confidential.

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